thereunder to private sector, and the steps taken and being taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) and (b) Gas pipelines in the country have been laid and are being laid by the companies on commercial consideration. The gas pipelines network is proposed to be laid in a competitive environment with participation from both the public and private sectors. The development of network would *inter-alia* depend upon the availability of gas and necessary tie-ups for sourcing and marketing. At present, apart from GAIL (India) Limited (GAIL), other entities like Gujarat State Petronet Limited (GSPL) and Assam Gas Company Limited (AGCL) are also engaged in transmission of natural gas. Besides, a number of entities are engaged in the business of local gas distribution.

Exploration of oil in Sri Lanka

824. SHRIMATI S.G. INDIRA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Sri Lankan Government had invited India to explore for oil in that country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government have accepted the proposal of the Sri Lankan Government; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) to (d) As a follow up to a shared desire between India and Sri Lanka to collaborate in E&P activities in Sri Lanka, and as a sequel to the visit of the then Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas of India to Colombo in May, 2003, a high level delegation from ONGC visited Sri Lanka in December, 2003 for discussions. It was considered that in view of the work already carried out by ONGC in the Cauvery basin, where significant reserves have been established, further exploration in the same area on the Sri Lankan side could be productive on account of geological similarity. It was,

therefore, proposed that ONGC/OVL should submit a suitable proposal for acquiring the blocks in the Gulf of Mannar region in the western offshore of Sri Lanka. OVL has purchased seismic data from M/s TGS NOPEC for Gulf of Mannar to examine the feasibility of their participation in E&P activities in the area.

GAIL (India) Limited had also approached the Sri Lankan Government in October 2005 with the objective of securing a few E&P blocks through the negotiation route. Subsequently, a GAIL team visited Colombo on 26-27 October 2005 and held discussions with the Govt. of Sri Lanka. GAIL was advised to examine the seismic data and inform the Board of Investments of Sri Lanka about blocks of interest to it. Regarding award of E&P blocks on nomination basis, GAIL has reported that the Sri Lankan side has informed that a bilateral MoU/Protocol would be entered between the Governments of India and Sri Lanka for awarding 2 or 3 blocks to Indian parties.

Allotment of petrol pumps in Andhra Pradesh

825. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of petrol pumps allotted by public sector oil companies in Andhra Pradesh during the last two years;

(b) the number of cases in which No Objection Certificates for setting up of petrol pumps were sought from the district collectors in Andhra Pradesh;

(c) the details of criteria used for the setting up of petrol pumps;

(d) whether any complaints has been received about violations of these criteria in Andhra Pradesh during the last two years; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) and (b) During the last two years, i.e., 2004-05 and 2005-06, the public sector oil marketing companies (OMCs), viz. Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPC), Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPC) and IBP Co. Ltd. (IBP) have alloted 865 retail outlet (RO)